June 30, 2025

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senator

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senator

The Honorable Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

The Honorable Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

The Honorable Jeff Hurd
Member of Congress

The Honorable Lauren Boebert
Member of Congress

The Honorable Jeff Crank
Member of Congress

The Honorable Jason Crow
Member of Congress

The Honorable Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress

The Honorable Gabe Evans
Member of Congress

Dear Colorado Congressional Delegation,

As representatives of Colorado's aerospace industry, which is home to over 2,000 aerospace businesses that employ more than 55,000 people directly and another 184,000 people indirectly[1], we write to urge you to maintain strong funding for space science and workforce training programs at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) next fiscal year and beyond.

Colorado's aerospace industry is a global powerhouse comprised of established companies with a legacy of leadership for decades and earlier-stage companies pioneered by a new generation of entrepreneurs. Federal funding is essential to this diverse and impactful ecosystem and helps fuel innovation and new technologies with applications both in space and on Earth. Colorado merited $38 billion in federal aerospace funding for its companies, military bases, federal research labs, and universities in 2024 alone.[2]

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[1] Five Ways Colorado's Aerospace Industry is Out of This World | Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade

[2] Five Ways Colorado's Aerospace Industry is Out of This World | Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade

Federal funding to our state's world-class universities is also essential to our companies' collective success. Colorado is home to some of the nation's top university aerospace programs, including at the University of Colorado, Colorado School of Mines, and the U.S. Air Force Academy. NASA research grants to universities provide a dual benefit to the taxpayer; they advance American space science and innovation *and* train the skilled workforce Colorado's aerospace industry needs. NASA space missions likewise offer a uniquely valuable opportunity for Colorado students to participate directly in space exploration and enter the workforce already possessing the experience and skills sought by industry. Collectively, NASA science and exploration brings $259 million to the state[3].

For example, the Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics (LASP) at the University of Colorado Boulder, the world's only academic research institute to send instruments to all eight planets and Pluto, employs more than 250 undergraduate and graduate students annually, who are "hands-on" in every aspect of missions. LASP students power on and off satellite instruments, change the tilt of solar panels, collect scientific data, and much more. These students graduate uniquely trained to work on commercial and government spacecraft. This hands-on experience inspires and effectively trains the next generation of American space talent, essential to our companies and to keeping America First[4] in space.

Colorado School of Mines is home to the world's first program in Space Resources, training scientists and engineers to advance the identification, extraction, and utilization of resources in space. The Mines program supports exploration, development of lunar and planetary bases, propellant production and manufacturing, and the growth of the new space economy. Through research partnerships, hands-on lab projects, and building space payloads with NASA and the aerospace industry, students are tackling challenges beyond Earth, shaping the future of space exploration and strengthening Colorado's – and the nation's – aerospace workforce.

As the business community reliant on Colorado's next generation skilled aerospace workforce, we must speak with one voice about the importance of the research and training conducted at our nation's universities in partnership with NASA. While we understand and respect the need to manage the federal budget and carefully steward taxpayer funds, NASA research and training programs are investments that will pay dividends for decades to come and help the government, academia and industry work together to unfurl America's Golden Age of space innovation and exploration[5].

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[3] NASA Science Spending Across the US | The Planetary Society
[4] NASA Soars to New Heights in First 100 Days of Trump Administration - NASA
[5] FY 2026 Budget Request - NASA

As such, we respectfully urge you to work with congressional appropriators and leadership to secure stable funding across NASA's mission directorates in Fiscal Year 2026. In particular, we encourage you to reject proposals that would reduce funding for projects and missions in the Science and Space Technology directorates by a staggering 50 percent and eliminate the STEM Education directorate, which administers the National Space Grant College and Fellowship Project, which partners with more than 22 companies in Colorado and engages nearly 675 students in our state on an annual basis. We also urge you to reject proposals that would terminate key missions built or operated in Colorado. Make no mistake about it gutting these programs will harm America's future leadership in space.

Thank you for your strong support for Colorado aerospace companies and for championing the partnerships and programs that will continue to inspire and prepare the Centennial State's next generation aerospace workforce.

Sincerely,

Joe Rice
Director of Government Relations
Lockheed Martin Space

Christie Lee
State and Local Affairs Director
United Launch Alliance

Ron Lopez
President & Managing Director
Astroscale U.S. Inc.

Bradley Cheetham
CEO and President
Advanced Space

Dan Jablonski
CEO
Ursa Major Technologies

Barry Hamilton
CEO
Red Canyon Software, Inc.

Raymond H. Gonzales
President, Metro Denver EDC
Colorado Space Coalition (MDEDC)

Morgan Alu
Co-Chair
Aerospace States Association – CO Chapter

Debra Wilcox
Chair
Colorado Space Business Roundtable

Stacey L. DeFore
Chair
Citizens for Space Exploration